



# ***PRESS RELEASE***

## ***SENATOR MARTHA M. ESCUTIA***

### ***30<sup>th</sup> Senate District***

*Representing: Bell, Bell Gardens, Commerce, Cudahy, East L.A., Florence/Miramonte, Hacienda Heights, Huntington Park, La Mirada, Maywood, Los Nietos, Montebello, Norwalk, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs, South El Monte, South Gate, Vernon, Walnut Park, Whittier*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
September 30, 2002

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### **Governor Signs Senator Escutia's Lead-safe Schools Bill**

**Sacramento** – California took one step closer to the eradication of lead hazards in its schools today, when the Governor signed Senator Martha Escutia's Senate Bill 21.

"For years, we have known that lead hazards persist in our schools," Senator Escutia (D – Norwalk) said. "Lead poisoning poses serious threats to the health of young children. It causes learning disabilities, behavior problems and organ damage. I am very encouraged that this Administration agrees that we need to we take lead poisoning seriously and get those hazards out of our schools."

SB 21, which goes into effect on January 1, 2003, will allow school districts to utilize school facilities and modernization funding for the removal lead hazards on their campuses.

Despite the fact that lead paint has not been manufactured for more than 20 years, many older schools still have areas painted with what is now known to be a highly dangerous toxic. In good condition, lead paint poses no danger. However, when the paint begins to peel or rub off, young children can easily ingest it. Swallowing just miniscule amounts of lead paint dust particles can dangerously elevate the level of lead in a child's blood and cause serious neurological damage.

"I have a strong history of working on issues of children's environmental health," the senator said. "This new law ensures that schools have the resources to handle any potential lead hazards and to protect their students from the debilitating effects of lead poisoning."

Investigative reports by KCBS in Los Angeles and San Francisco have revealed that many schools in urban areas still bear deteriorating lead paint. News footage has shown children touching windowsills, picnic tables and playground equipment with deteriorating lead paint – and then putting their hands in their mouths. Experts were certain those children were ingesting dangerous amounts of lead.

The news that lead exists in our schools is nothing new. In 1997, the state Department of Health Services released a little-publicized report that found lead to be present in 77 percent of 200 California schools surveyed. At that time, 38 percent of those schools had lead paint in dilapidated condition.

“It is surprising to me,” Senator Escutia said, “that ridding the schools of lead has not been a priority for our school districts, particularly because of the learning disabilities and behavior problems known to result from lead exposure. With lead abatement added to the list of activities that can be performed with facilities funding, I hope schools will be proactive in protecting their students from the devastating consequences of lead poisoning.”

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